



Hobby School of Public Affairs  
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY  
Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland  
School of Public Affairs

# TEXAS TRENDS 2025

UNDERSTANDING HOUSEHOLD ENERGY  
BURDEN AND PERCEPTIONS IN TEXAS



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# Understanding Household Energy Burden and Perceptions in Texas

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# Texas Trends Survey 2025: Understanding Household Energy Burden and Perceptions in Texas

In 2021, the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston, in partnership with the Executive Master of Public Administration Program at the Barbara Jordan–Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University, launched a five-year survey project to study Texas’s changing population. The fifth survey in the series was fielded between September 19 and October 1, 2025 and focused on Texans’ opinions about the 2026 elections, public policy, and energy use.

The findings from the statewide 2025 *Texas Trends Survey*, are presented in four separate reports. The first report examines Texans’ voting intentions for the 2026 U.S. Senate primaries and general election, shifts in support for Donald Trump, and preferences in the 2026 Republican Texas Attorney General primary. The second report explores Texans’ opinions on redistricting and legislation passed during the 2025 Texas Legislature’s second special session, including measures related to abortion medication, bathroom and locker room access, and the prosecution of election-related crimes. The third report focuses on Texans’ attitudes related to immigration policy and border security. The current report presents findings on household energy use and related concerns across the state.

## Executive Summary

**Electric bills and spending:** Texans express widespread concern about rising electricity costs and unequal energy burdens. The average monthly summer bill is \$168. Nearly 45% of Texans pay more than \$200 per month for electricity, and 33% spend 7% or more of their household income on summer electricity—above the high-burden threshold.

**Payment hardships:** About 21% of Texans reported having difficulty paying their energy bills at least three times in the past year, and 19% said they had to choose between paying for energy or essentials such as food, medicine, or rent. Hardship rates were higher among Black (24%), Hispanic (30%), and respondents in the Other category (32%) households, compared with 13% among white and 12% among Asian households.

**Housing and efficiency:** Fifty-nine percent of respondents rate their homes as somewhat or very energy efficient, while 19% consider them inefficient. Only 47% of households earning under \$30,000 view their homes as efficient, compared with 75% of those earning \$150,000 or more. Among low-income Texans (under \$30,000), just 37% live in homes built within the past 20 years, and more than 36% live in homes older than 40 years.

**Energy use priorities:** During extreme weather events, the main household electricity needs include refrigeration (58%), air conditioning (52%), and medical devices (43%).

**Clean-energy perceptions:** Thirty-nine percent of Texans believe clean-energy solutions can both lower costs and improve efficiency, though opinions remain sharply divided along partisan lines.

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## Introduction

Energy reliability is critically important in Texas, where residents frequently face extreme weather and natural disasters. In the Gulf Coast and East Texas regions—including Houston—sustained heat and high humidity make air conditioning essential for public health and safety, particularly in vulnerable communities. Increased demand during the summer places additional pressure on the state’s already strained power infrastructure. Although freezing temperatures are relatively uncommon, more frequent cold snaps across the state now pose serious risks, as heating systems depend on uninterrupted access to power.<sup>1</sup>

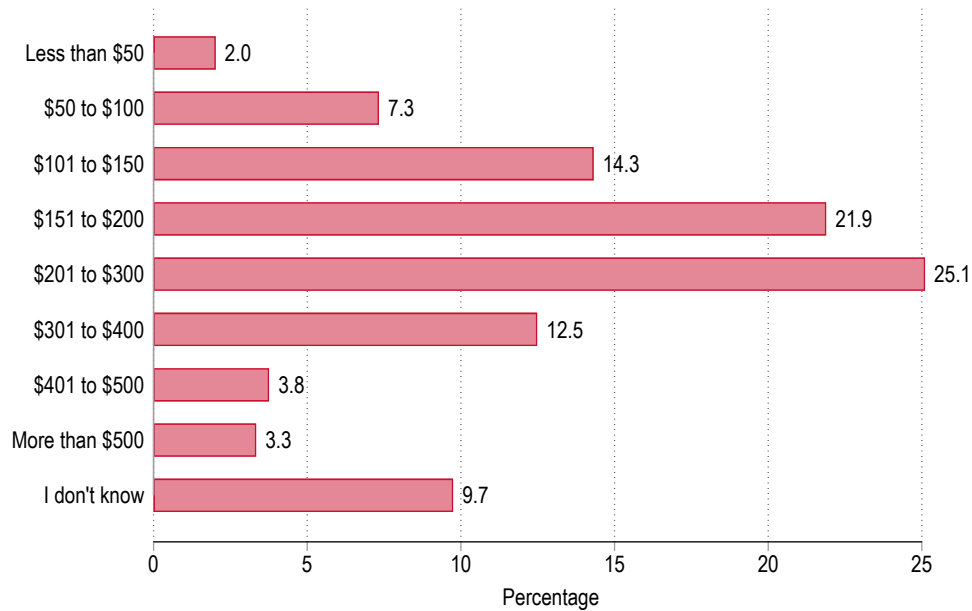
Since 2021, policymakers and regulators have enacted legislation and regulatory changes aimed at reforming and strengthening Texas’s power grid. These measures include raising reliability standards and performance, expanding backup power services, and improving transmission planning.<sup>2,3</sup> However, sustained population growth, rising peak demand, and increasing energy needs from data centers and cryptocurrency operations continue to strain the Texas electricity grid.<sup>4</sup> In the Greater Houston area—where heat waves, hurricanes, and severe storms frequently threaten infrastructure—reliability remains a persistent public concern. A 2025 survey by the University of Houston’s Hobby School of Public Affairs found that 88% of Harris County residents were worried about extended power outages during the summer.<sup>5,6</sup>

Beyond concerns about reliability, Texans are also facing rising electricity costs. CenterPoint Energy, one of the state’s three main electricity delivery utilities, recently announced an increase in delivery charges, adding an average of \$13.50 per month during the summer for households using 1,000 kWh, along with a Public Utility Commission-approved \$2 monthly base rate increase to help recover costs from storm repairs and infrastructure upgrades.<sup>7</sup> The strain on the Texas electric grid is expected to intensify with the rapid expansion of energy-intensive data centers across the state, which could further increase costs for consumers.<sup>8</sup>

Amid these rising costs and projections of continued strain on the Texas grid, responses to the 2025 *Texas Trends Survey* provide insight into household energy spending, the difficult trade-offs created by high energy burdens, and how vulnerabilities compound across communities. These patterns reflect structural differences in housing quality and energy efficiency, neighborhood infrastructure, and access to energy-saving technologies. For example, low-income households living in older, less energy-efficient homes often face higher energy burdens. The following sections document how these differences are reflected in the survey findings presented in the 2025 *Texas Trends Report*.

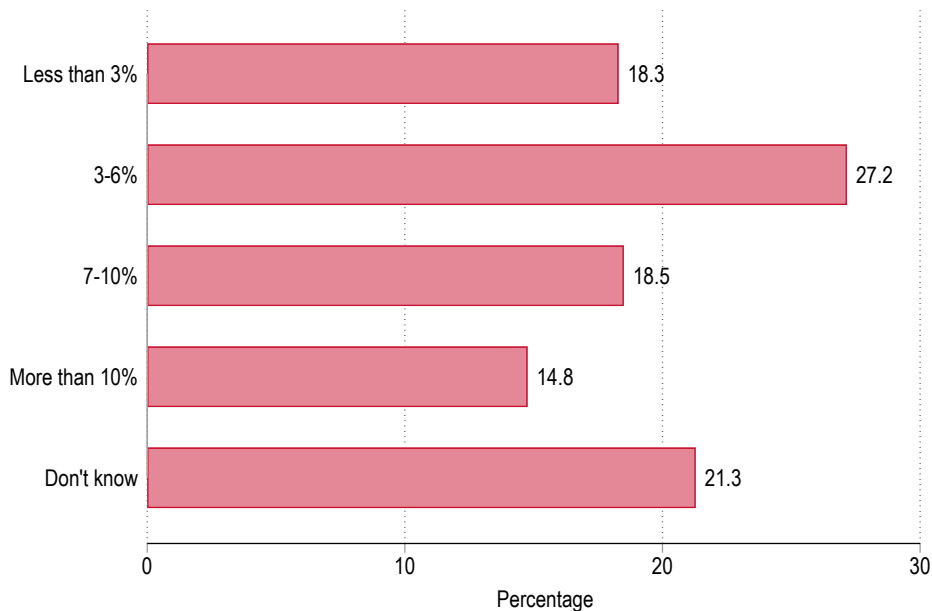
## Energy Costs and Burden

The vast majority of Texans report spending more than \$100 per month on electricity during the summer as shown in Figure 1. Excluding those who did not know their average summer electricity spending, nearly 50% of report spending more than \$200.



**Figure 1:** Summer average monthly electric bill

A household's energy burden is calculated as the percentage of gross income spent on energy, including electricity. According to the American Council for Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE, 2020), households spending 6% or more of their income on energy are considered to have a high energy burden, while those spending 10% or more are classified as severely burdened.<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 shows the percentage of household income spent on electricity during the summer.



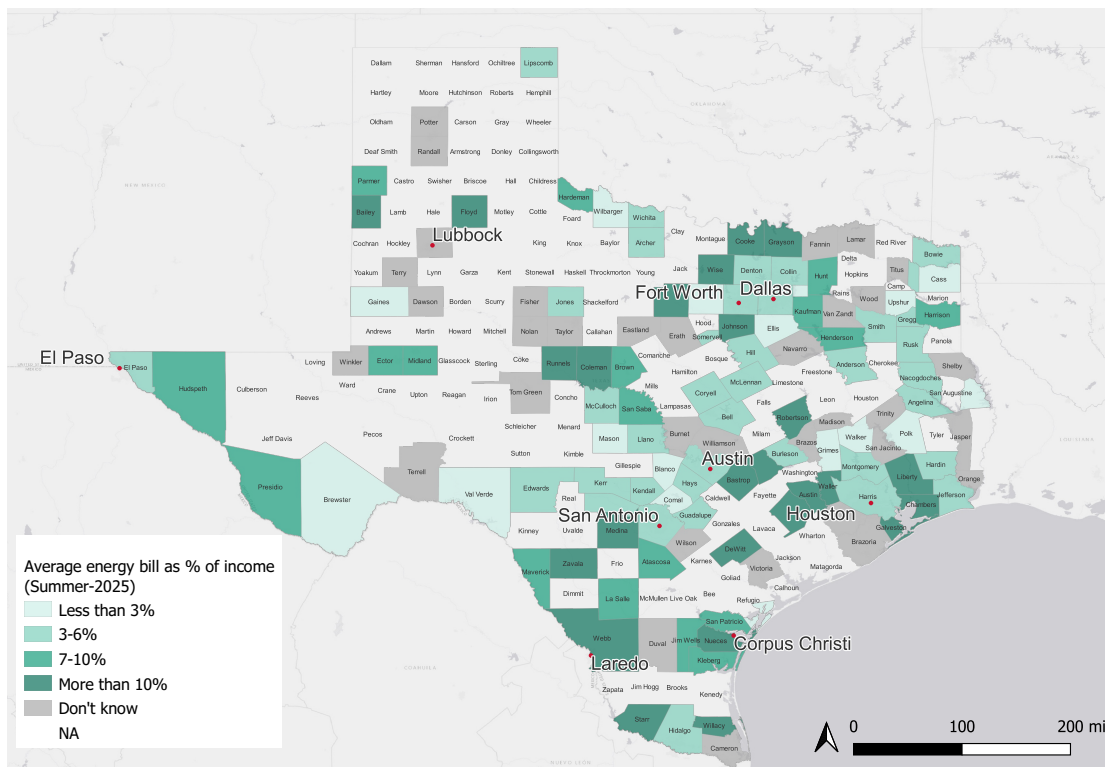
**Figure 2:** Summer average monthly electric bill as percentage of income

Over a quarter of respondents reported spending between three and six percent of their income on summer electricity bills, while one in five were unable to estimate their burden. Notably,

one-third reported spending seven or more percent, indicating a severe electricity burden.

Data from the U.S. Department of Energy (2024) indicate that energy burdens are disproportionately higher for low-income, Black, and Hispanic households.<sup>10</sup> We observe similar trends among the Texas households surveyed: the percentage of income spent on electricity by Hispanics, Blacks, and those in the “Other” category (including Native American, Middle Eastern, two or more races, and other) is roughly double that of white and Asian households. Specifically, 23% of Hispanic respondents, 19% of Black respondents, and 22% of Other respondents reported spending 11% or more of their income on electricity, compared with 10% of white respondents and 8% of Asian respondents.

Figure 3 shows energy cost burdens by county, with responses categorized based on the most common answers from respondents in each county. Southern and western regions of the Texas face higher energy burdens; counties in southeast Texas report electricity bills exceeding 7% of household income on average during the summer, while counties in south and west Texas—including areas near El Paso, Laredo, San Antonio, and parts of the Gulf Coast—tend to show households spending 7–10% of their income on energy. In contrast, several central and north Texas counties, including those around Austin, Fort Worth, and Dallas, display lower burdens, under 6%. Counties in large urban centers, including the Greater Houston area, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio, show moderate burdens of 3–6%. The lower average burden in these areas likely reflects higher incomes and greater housing efficiency compared with rural counties, though considerable variation exists within and across urban and suburban areas.

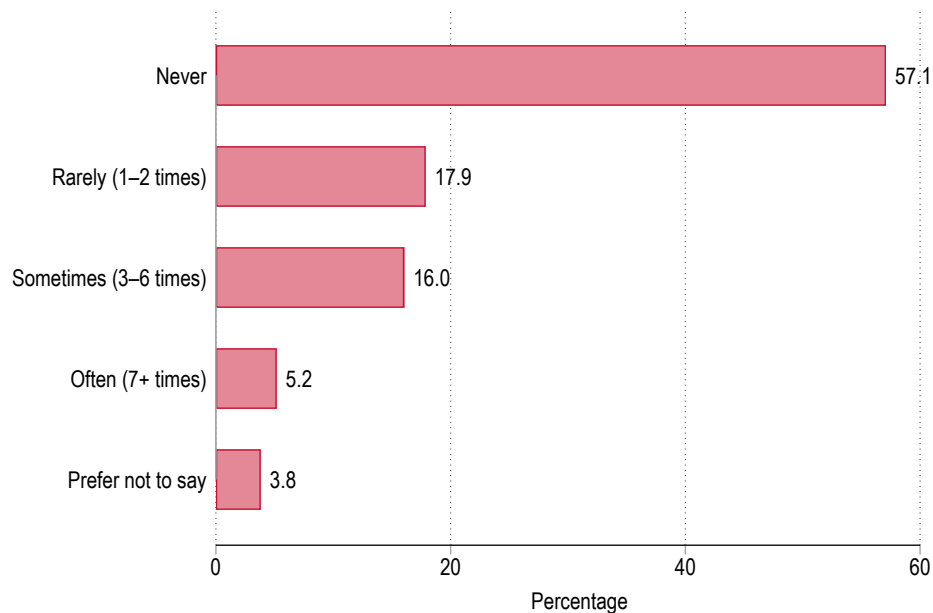


**Figure 3:** Summer average monthly electric bill as percentage of income by county. The category N/A shows counties for which no data are available.

## Hardships Related to Energy Costs

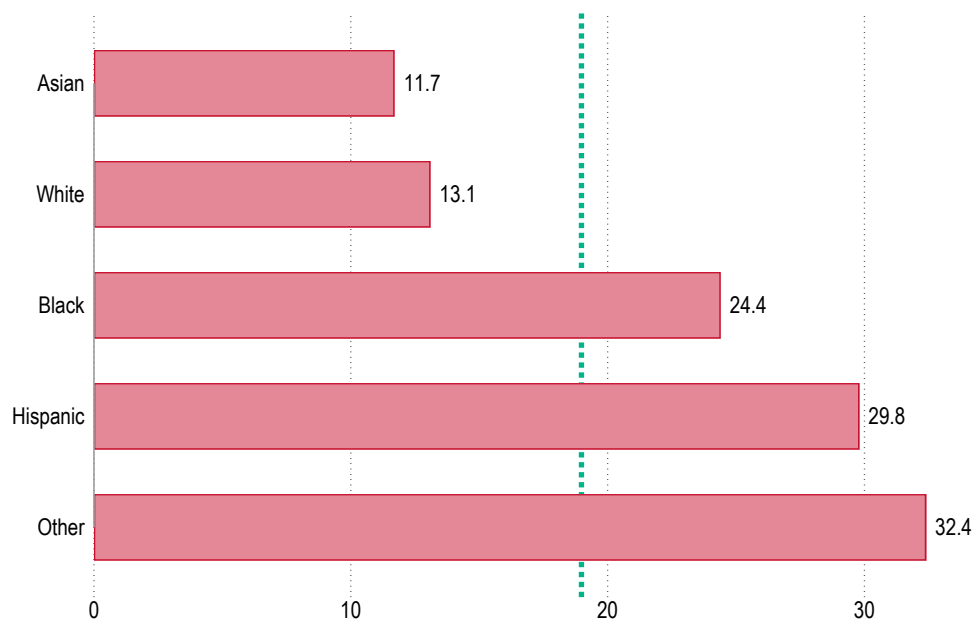
The Federal Reserve Board's report on energy consumption and inequality in the U.S. reinforces findings that low-income households spend roughly three times more of their income on energy than higher-income groups.<sup>11</sup> This disparity contributes to financial strain and increases the likelihood that households must make difficult tradeoffs between paying energy bills and covering other essential needs. In Texas—particularly in the Gulf Coast region—these inequalities further exacerbate financial and health vulnerabilities due to frequent exposure to natural disasters and extreme weather events.

To assess whether electricity costs contribute to household financial hardship in Texas, respondents were asked if they had experienced difficulty paying their energy bills in the past 12 months. These national patterns are reflected in Texas, where addressing energy inequities requires coordinated efforts linking reliability and affordability. Our survey results show that 57% of respondents have never experienced difficulty paying their energy bills, while nearly 18% reported trouble making payments once or twice over the past year. However, over one in five respondents reported more frequent difficulties: 16% sometimes struggled (three to six times in the last 12 months), and 5% often failed to make their payments (Figure 6).



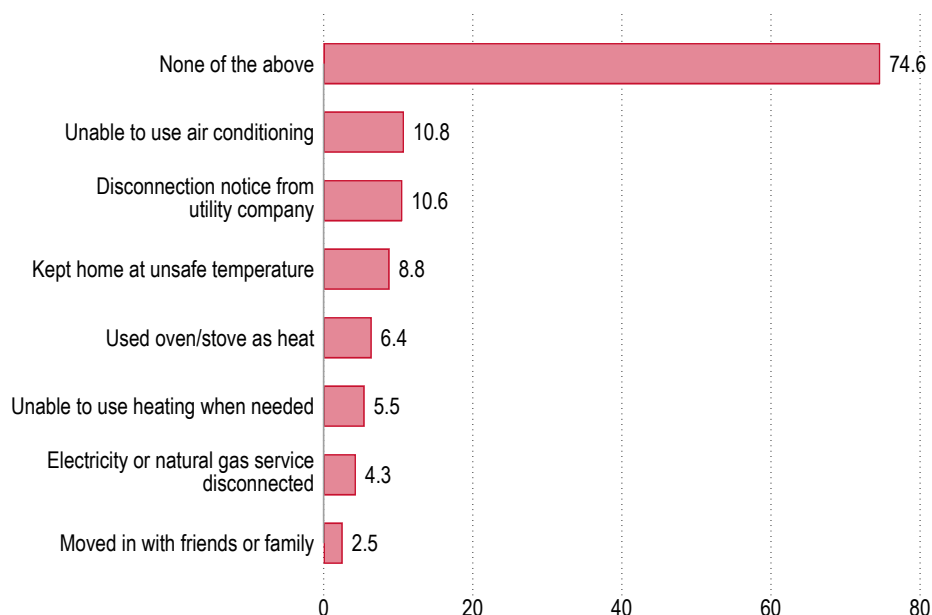
**Figure 4:** In the past 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your energy bills?

We also asked respondents whether, over the past year, they had to choose between paying their electric or natural gas bills and covering other necessities such as food, medicine, or rent. Nearly one-fifth (19%) reported having to make such difficult choices, while the vast majority of respondents did not. Differences emerge by race and ethnicity, as shown in Figure 5: respondents identifying as Black (24%), Hispanic (30%), or Other race/ethnicity (32%) were more likely to experience hardships paying their energy bills than those identifying as white (13%) or Asian (12%).



**Figure 5:** In the past 12 months have you had to choose between paying the electric or natural gas bills and paying for other necessities like food, medicine, or rent?

The survey also asked respondents about specific hardships their households might have experienced due to energy costs, such as being unable to use air conditioning or having electricity service disconnected (Figure 6).

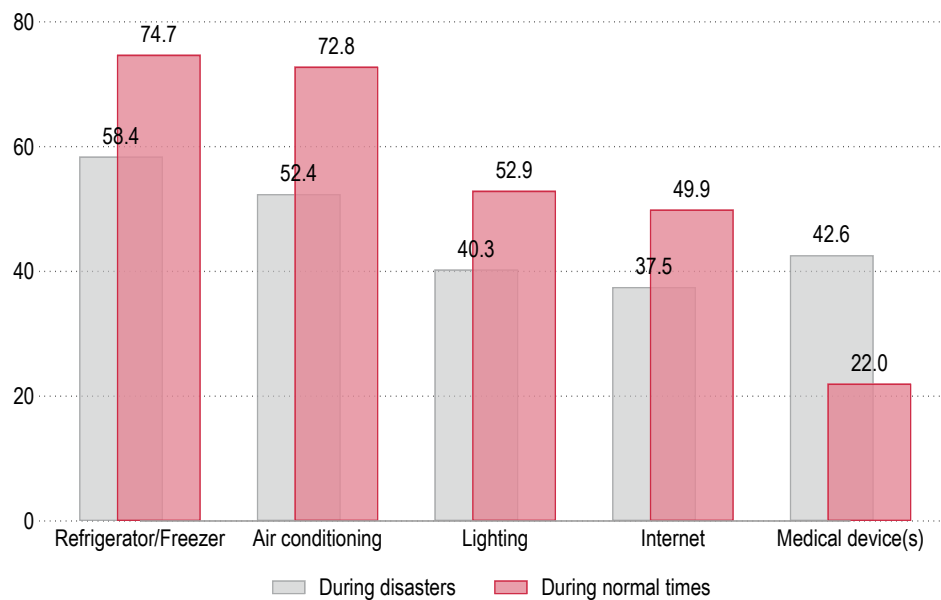


**Figure 6:** In the past 12 months, have any of the following occurred due to energy costs? Please select all that apply.

Three-quarters of respondents reported not experiencing hardships due to energy costs. About one in ten Texans reported being unable to use air conditioning or receiving disconnection

notices from their utility company, while 9% indicated they had kept their home at unsafe temperatures. Smaller percentages reported using an oven or stove as a source of heating (6%), being unable to use heating when needed (5%), or having their electricity or natural gas services disconnected (4%).

Respondents were also asked to select the three most important uses of electricity during natural disasters and extreme weather events, as well as during normal times (see Figure 7). During normal summer conditions, the top three uses of electricity are refrigerator/freezer (75%), air conditioning (73%), and lighting (53%), followed by internet (50%) and medical devices (22%).



**Figure 7:** Top uses of electricity

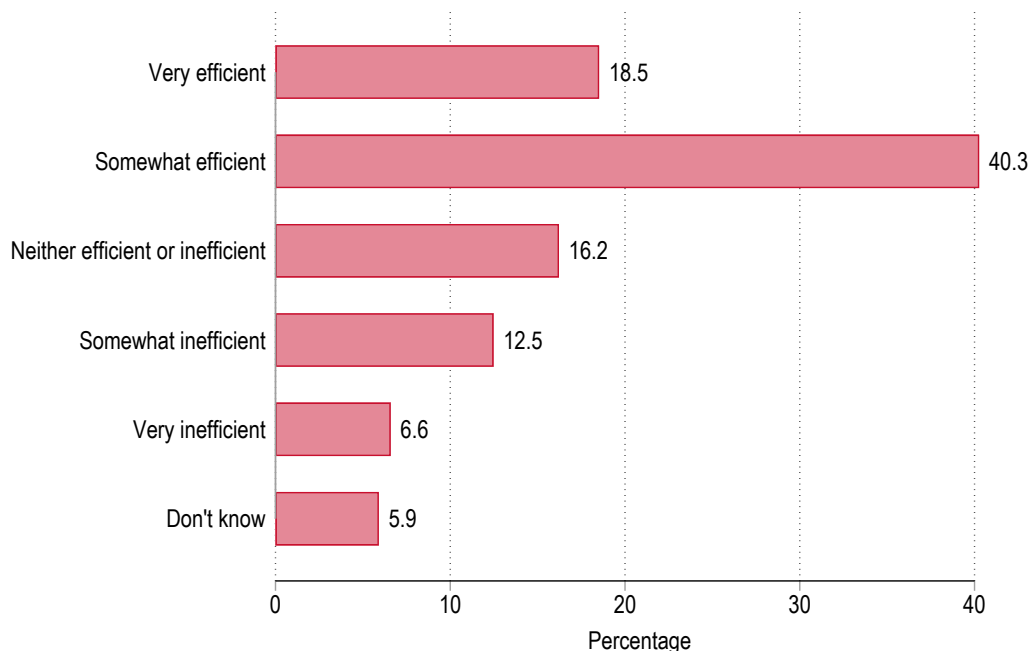
During disasters and extreme summer weather, the top three uses of electricity are refrigerator/freezer (58%), air conditioning (52%), and medical devices (43%). As shown in Figure 7, the use of medical devices becomes more importance during extreme weather events and natural disasters, with lighting (40%) and the internet (37%) ranking fourth and fifth in importance.

These results align with the third wave of the Texas Trends surveys (2023), which highlighted the role of energy in extreme weather preparedness and mitigation. That survey found that 40% of Texans reported raising their thermostats by one or more degrees, and 39% said they used energy-efficient light bulbs. More than one-fifth of respondents (22%) reported purchasing additional fans. Similarly, during periods of extreme heat, the most common measure Texans reported to reduce energy use was turning off lights when not in use (74.9% of respondents).<sup>12</sup>

## Energy Efficiency

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their home's energy efficiency and the age of their residences to better understand housing conditions and their implications for energy use

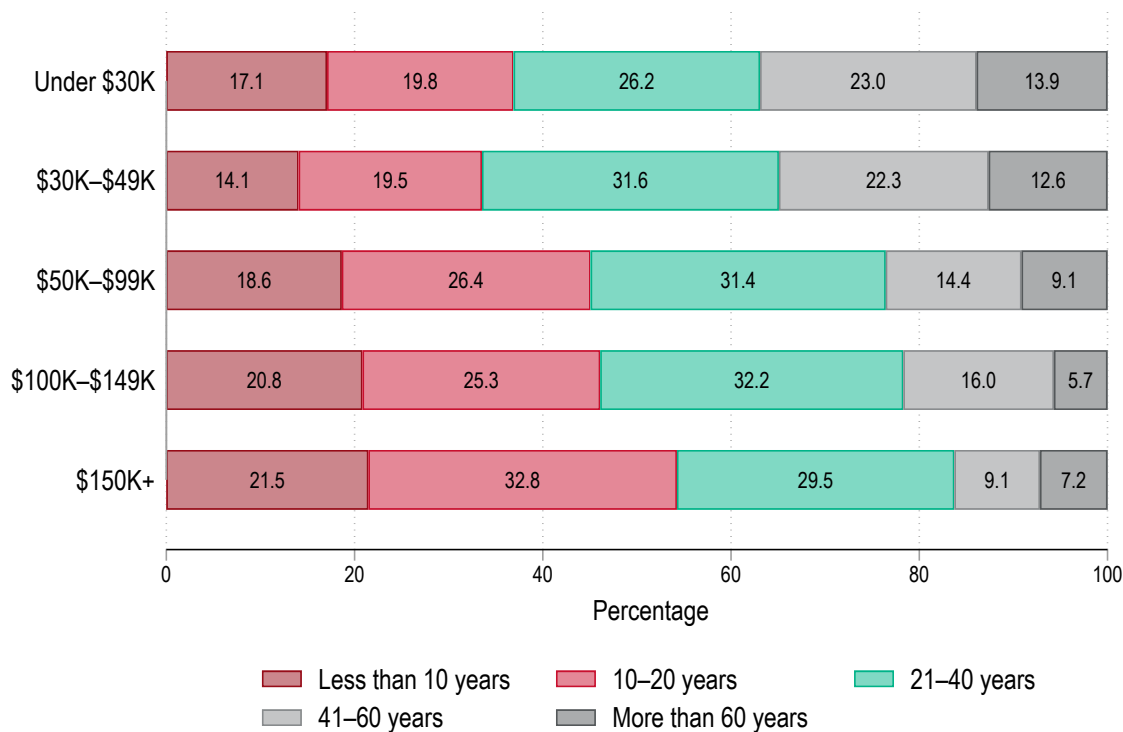
and sustainability across the state. Figure 8 shows Texans' perceptions of their homes' energy efficiency. The majority Texans (59%) consider their homes to be *somewhat* or *very efficient*. By contrast, roughly 19% view their homes as inefficient, with 12% reporting them as *somewhat inefficient* and 7% *very inefficient*.



**Figure 8:** How would you rate the overall energy efficiency of your home?

While nearly three-fifths of Texans consider their homes energy efficient, notable differences exist across income levels. Only 47% of those with household earning under \$30,000 consider their homes as *very* or *somewhat efficient*, compared with 71% of those earning between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and 75% of households with incomes of \$150,000 or more. Given the higher energy burdens among low-income households, lower energy efficiency further exacerbates energy inequality. (See Table 1 in Technical Appendix)

Figure 9 also illustrates the relationship between home age and household income in Texas. Lower-income respondents are more likely to live in older homes, whereas newer homes are concentrated among higher-income groups. Among households earning under \$30,000, only 37% live in homes built within the last 20 years, while the same proportion live in homes older than 40 years. Households earning \$100,000-\$149,999 are more likely to occupy newer homes, with nearly 46% living in homes under 20 years old. The highest-income group (\$150,000+) shows the newest housing profile, with over half (54%) living in homes built in the last two decades.

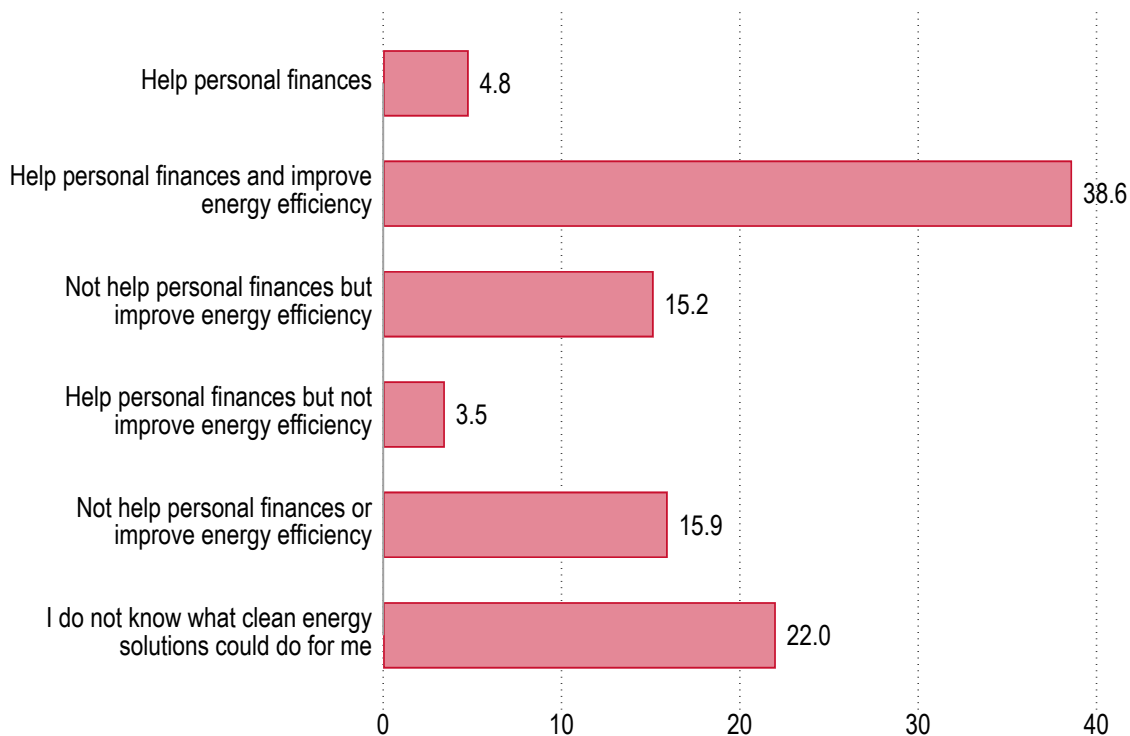


**Figure 9: Age of home by family income**

## Clean Energy and Costs

An analysis by Aurora Energy Research for the Texas Association of Business suggests that restricting renewable energy growth in Texas would raise costs for families and businesses and could further strain grid reliability.<sup>13</sup> With recent legislation that could reshape renewable development—and potentially electricity prices—we asked respondents how clean-energy solutions might affect household finances and energy efficiency (Figure 10).

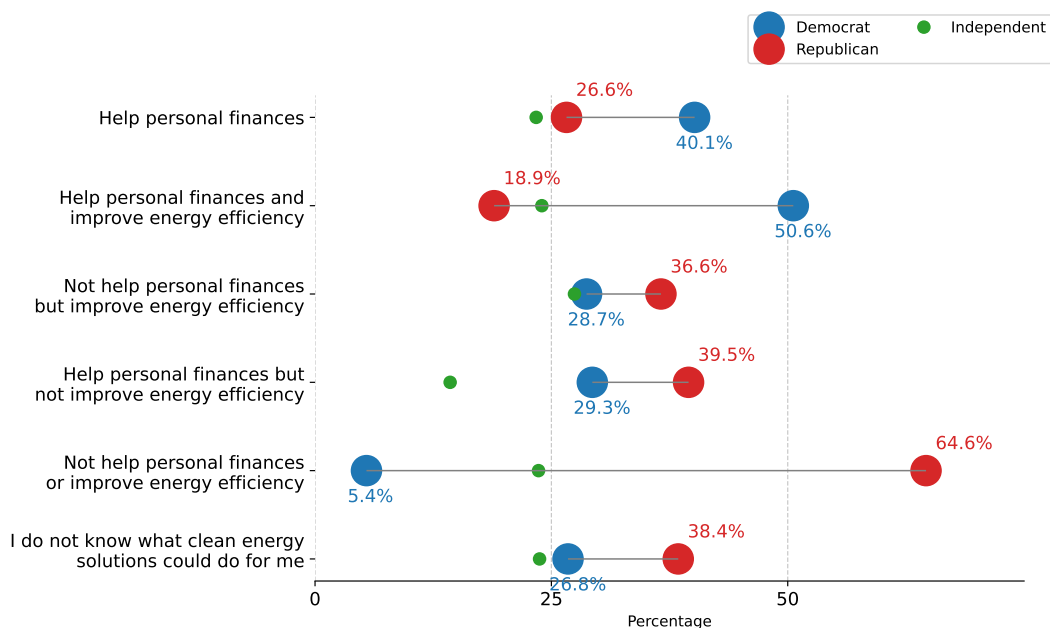
Nearly two-fifths of respondents said that clean energy would help both their personal finances and improve energy efficiency (Figure 10). Few respondents believed that clean energy would help personal finances alone (5%) or help personal finances but not energy efficiency (3%). Over one-fifth of respondents did not know what impact clean energy solutions could have for them. Notably, low-income households were much more likely to *not know* whether and how clean energy solutions might affect their finances or energy efficiency: one-third of households earning less than \$30,000 and a quarter of households earning \$30,000-\$49,999 reported not knowing, compared with 18% of those earning \$100,000-\$149,999 and 10% of those earning \$150,000 or more. (See Table 2 in Technical Appendix)



**Figure 10:** Perceived benefits of clean energy solutions

Perceptions of the benefits of clean energy differ sharply by party identification. Among respondents who said that clean energy solutions would improve both finances and energy efficiency, 50% were Democrats and 19% were Republicans. In contrast, among those who believe that clean energy solutions would neither help personal finances nor improve energy efficiency, 65% were Republicans and just 5% were Democrats.

Policies that reduce electricity costs could meaningfully alleviate hardship. Roughly one-third of respondents report a high or severe summer burden, spending 7% or more of household income on electricity. These burdens show little partisan variation: similar shares of Democrats (35%), Republicans (32%), and Independents/Others (33%) report spending 7% or more, with small differences emerging only among respondents with lower burdens ( $\leq 6\%$ ). These data suggest that policies targeting electricity affordability could have broad impact, benefiting households across partisan lines.



**Figure 11:** Perceived benefits of clean energy solutions by party identification

## Conclusion

Texas households continue to navigate an evolving energy landscape shaped by climate volatility, rapid population growth, and infrastructure constraints. Communities along the Gulf Coast, in particular, face disproportionately low levels of investment relative to their high concentrations of energy-burdened households.<sup>14</sup> This imbalance constrains the ability of local governments and utilities to build resilient and equitable energy systems.

The Texas Trends 2025 survey reveals that, while most Texans perceive their homes as energy efficient, energy inequality persists across race and ethnicity, income, and geography. Older housing and lower household incomes correlate strongly with higher energy burdens, highlighting that energy affordability is not only an economic issue but also a matter of social equity.

Persistent disparities in electricity costs and reliability place an outsized strain on vulnerable communities. Many Texans are forced to make difficult trade-offs to maintain access to essential energy services, a challenge that is intensified by frequent storms and heatwaves. Addressing these inequities will require targeted investments in energy efficiency, modernized infrastructure, and robust consumer protections—particularly as utilities seek to recover costs from storm damages and grid upgrades through higher delivery rates.

As Texas continues to expand its energy-intensive industries, including data centers and manufacturing, balancing reliability, affordability, and sustainability will be critical to the state's economic and social well-being. The survey findings suggest that policy efforts should prioritize reducing household energy burdens through efficient housing retrofits, equitable investment in clean energy, and transparent regulation of utility rate adjustments. Such measures will strengthen resilience, promote energy justice, and ensure that all Texans have access to affordable, reliable power in the years ahead.

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## Respondents' Demographics

The fifth wave of the Texas Trends Survey survey was conducted in English and Spanish, among 1,650 respondents recruited by YouGov, aged 18 years of age and older, resulting in a confidence interval of +/-2.41% for the overall survey population. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education and are representative of the Texas registered voter population. White registered voters account for 55% of this population of Texas registered voters, Latino registered voters for 26%, Black registered voters for 13%, and others for 6%. Women represent 54% of this population and men 46%. Regarding generations, 32% of this population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 26% to Generation X (Gen-X) (1965-1980), 26% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation, and 16% to Generation Z (Gen-Z) (1997-2012). The highest level of educational attainment of 39% of the population is a four-year college degree or a post-graduate degree, of 32% of the population is a two-year college degree or some college, and of 29% of the population is a high school degree or less. Republicans account for 44% of this population, Democrats for 41% and Independents for 13%, with 2% unsure of their partisan identification. In the 2024 presidential election, among those who cast a ballot last year, 56% voted for Republican Donald Trump and 43% for Democrat Kamala Harris, with 1% supporting a third-party candidate.

## Technical Appendix

**Table 1: Perceived energy efficiency of home by income level**

|                                   | Under<br>\$30,000 |       | \$30,000-<br>\$49,999 |       | \$50,000-<br>\$99,999 |       | \$100,000-<br>\$149,999 |       | \$150,000<br>or more |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                                   | No.               | %     | No.                   | %     | No.                   | %     | No.                     | %     | No.                  | %     |
| Very efficient                    | 45                | 15.1  | 57                    | 21.5  | 92                    | 17.6  | 38                      | 16.4  | 51                   | 27.7  |
| Somewhat efficient                | 81                | 27.0  | 84                    | 31.5  | 241                   | 46.0  | 125                     | 53.6  | 84                   | 45.6  |
| Neither efficient nor inefficient | 60                | 20.1  | 47                    | 17.6  | 91                    | 17.4  | 27                      | 11.5  | 21                   | 11.5  |
| Somewhat inefficient              | 43                | 14.5  | 42                    | 15.7  | 62                    | 11.9  | 29                      | 12.5  | 17                   | 9.2   |
| Very inefficient                  | 38                | 12.7  | 27                    | 10.1  | 21                    | 4.0   | 10                      | 4.5   | 6                    | 3.4   |
| Don't know                        | 32                | 10.7  | 10                    | 3.6   | 16                    | 3.0   | 3                       | 1.5   | 5                    | 2.8   |
| <b>Total</b>                      | 300               | 100.0 | 266                   | 100.0 | 523                   | 100.0 | 232                     | 100.0 | 184                  | 100.0 |

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

**Table 2: Perceived benefits of clean energy solutions by income level**

|                                                         | Under<br>\$30,000 |       | \$30,000-<br>\$49,999 |       | \$50,000-<br>\$99,999 |       | \$100,000-<br>\$149,999 |       | \$150,000<br>or more |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                                                         | No.               | %     | No.                   | %     | No.                   | %     | No.                     | %     | No.                  | %     |
| Help personal finance                                   | 21                | 6.9   | 10                    | 3.7   | 29                    | 5.5   | 10                      | 4.3   | 5                    | 2.6   |
| Help personal finance & improve energy efficiency       | 94                | 31.5  | 95                    | 35.9  | 193                   | 36.9  | 83                      | 35.6  | 84                   | 45.6  |
| Not help personal finance but improve energy efficiency | 36                | 12.2  | 48                    | 17.9  | 77                    | 14.7  | 41                      | 17.5  | 32                   | 17.1  |
| Help personal finance but not improve energy efficiency | 18                | 6.0   | 6                     | 2.4   | 27                    | 5.2   | 7                       | 2.8   | 4                    | 1.9   |
| Not help personal finance or energy efficiency          | 34                | 11.3  | 41                    | 15.5  | 93                    | 17.7  | 50                      | 21.4  | 42                   | 23.1  |
| Don't know what clean energy solutions can do for me    | 96                | 32.2  | 66                    | 24.6  | 105                   | 20.1  | 43                      | 18.3  | 18                   | 9.7   |
| <b>Total</b>                                            | 299               | 100.0 | 266                   | 100.0 | 523                   | 100.0 | 232                     | 100.0 | 184                  | 100.0 |

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

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